

FINAL SUMMARY



BIOLOGY COMMITTEE MEETING
Thursday, July 11, 2019
Conference Call

BIOLOGY COMMITTEE (BC) MEMBERS:

William Miller
Jacob Mazzone
Brian Westfall
Nathan Caswell, BC Alternate
Mark McKinstry
Benjamin Schleicher
Vincent Lamarra
Matthew Zeigler
Harry Crockett
Tom Wesche
Absent
Absent

REPRESENTING:

Southern Ute Tribe
Jicarilla Apache Nation, Chair
Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), Region 2
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation)
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 6
Navajo Nation
State of New Mexico
State of Colorado
Water Development Interests
Bureau of Land Management
Conservation Interests

COORDINATION COMMITTEE (CC) MEMBERS:

Ryan Christianson
Christina Noftsker, CC Alternate

REPRESENTING:

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
State of New Mexico

PROGRAM OFFICE (PO):

Melissa Mata, Program Coordinator
Scott Durst, Science Coordinator
Eliza Gilbert, Biologist

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Region 2
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Region 2
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Region 2

OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES:

Nate Franssen
Jill Wick, BC Alternate
Adam Barkalow
Steve Ross
Mel Warren
Wayne Hubert
Carrie Padgett, BC Alternate
Michael Farrington
Kathrine Creighton
Brian Hines
David Speas, BC Alternate
Marc Miller

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 2
State of New Mexico
State of New Mexico
Peer Reviewer
Peer Reviewer
Peer Reviewer
Water Development Interests
American Southwest Ichthyological Researchers
Utah Department of Wildlife Resources
Utah Department of Wildlife Resources
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

1. Introductions, changes to agenda, and review of Action Items

Nathan Caswell was introduced and is the new Project Leader for the Service's Region 2 New Mexico Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office. He will be a second BC alternate for Region 2.

Three topics were added to the agenda:

a. Fish trap and transport downstream of waterfall feasibility study

During both the annual meeting and the May CC meeting, the National Park Service and some CC members asked whether a study could be initiated to develop options to increase Razorback Sucker and Colorado Pikeminnow trapping below the waterfall and upstream transport. If this was possible, they also wanted to see if it could be in conjunction with the fish passage feasibility study to exhaust all potential options to provide upstream passage for fish below the waterfall? The PO is working to develop a study plan and is also working with state partners and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to determine if NFWF funds can financially support a trap and transport feasibility study.

b. Update on San Juan River Nonnative Fish Stocking Procedure and Cooperative Agreement

Zeigler emailed all partners on June 26, 2019 requesting final comments on the San Juan River Nonnative Fish Stocking Procedure and Cooperative Agreement. He requested comments by July 15, 2019 and anticipates the final version of the agreement be sent to signatories for signature at the end of August.

c. Update on Utah's Participation in the SJRIP

Utah is in the process of obtaining the governor's signature to the SJRIP's Cooperative Agreement. Once the governor signs the agreement, Utah will nominate BC and CC representatives.

Many of the action items were on the agenda. The items on the agenda were: 1) ongoing efforts to develop a habitat workshop, 2) an update on BOR's maintenance release 3) an update of the Colorado Pikeminnow Adaptive Management Stocking Plan, and 4) an update on the Razorback Sucker Augmentation Plan. The CC was provided an update on refraining from stocking Colorado Pikeminnow for 2019. Southwestern Native Aquatic Recovery and Resources Center (SNARRC) was informed of the decision and will not produce Colorado Pikeminnow for 2019. All scopes of work (SOW) that received comments were revised and responses to comments were included in the revised SOWs. This meeting is the result of the doodle poll for discussion of the 2nd draft annual work plan (AWP).

2. Approve draft summary meeting from 14 May 2019 BC meeting

Changes were made to the meeting based on comments received from Wesche, Zeigler, and Westfall. Wesche motioned to approve the meeting summary and Crockett seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

3. Update and discussion on 2020 Draft Annual Work Plan

General Comments

There was a request that SOW 41 (facilitated fish passage in the San Juan River) include translocation of Colorado Pikeminnow upstream from the waterfall to evaluate their behavioral response. The Principal Investigators (PI) will translocate any captured Colorado Pikeminnow but they will only be implanted with passive integrated transponder tags (PIT) and not an additional sonic tag.

Discussion between inclusion of SOW 19a (spring Razorback Sucker study) or SOW 44 (integrated bottleneck recruitment)

To balance the fiscal year 2020 budget, only one of these SOWs could be retained in the AWP. The BC thought both studies were valuable. After a full discussion, SOW 44 PIs withdrew their proposal to work on its methodology. They will resubmit the proposal for fiscal year 2021. The SOW 19a PIs were asked to include capture of Colorado Pikeminnow into their proposal, considering captures would occur in cooler spring months (i.e. should result in less mortality due to capture/handling). The PIs agreed to include that task in their final draft.

Discussion in regards to SOW 19a was summarized as follows

This SOW would provide an unusual comparison of two very different water years. In 2018, wild age-1 Razorback Sucker recruited and that year had some of the lowest flows since 2001; while 2019 has had the highest flows since 2008. The 2019 flows may have created habitat that could better support recruitment. Conducting this study would allow another test of this hypothesis. The SOW would allow BIA to obtain muscle plugs to support its study of selenium in Razorback Sucker. This SOW may not be necessary if it is possible to use the early demographic monitoring passes (i.e. those that occur before stocking of passively harvested fish), to assess age-1 recruitment. If fish <300 millimeter total length were captured in those passes, they could be assumed as wild recruits. Based on larval fish monitoring it would be hypothesized that recruitment would not occur in a high flow year and this is a drawback to the SOW. Some other concerns were related to the photography methodology and its use in analysis of hybridization/introgression. The intent of the pictures was to help field identification rather than a morphological study.

Discussion in regards to SOW 44 was summarized as follows

There was a strong desire to support the SOW because it related to addressing Colorado Pikeminnow recruitment bottlenecks. The main concern was that it was difficult to understand how the methodology would result in a better understanding or quantification of factors resulting in observed recruitment bottlenecks. It was suggested that approaches in the active literature be incorporated, that habitats be considered dynamic rather than static, and that habitat preference (difficult to study in the field due to displacement) should be considered and addressed in the SOW.

4. Update on post-2023 efforts

The SJRIP's process is slightly different than the one being conducted by the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program. Instead of asking participants to develop multiple scenarios, the PO developed a recommendation, as an example for BC members, and is now asking BC members to provide their own recommendation for each of the current actions implemented through the SJRIP. There is also the opportunity to add actions as each BC members sees fit. The PO will summarize these response for another BC meeting. The goal of that meeting will be to develop a single BC/PO recommendation for the CC to consider. The summary of BC recommendations will also include the individual recommendations.

A BC member asked for a rationale behind a PO recommendation with regards to prey training of Colorado Pikeminnow. The PO included prey training Colorado Pikeminnow in their recommendation because Colorado Pikeminnow that were polycultured at SNARRC to reduce Bonytail reproduction have been stocked into Hogback for the weir test and showed high second year return rates. This management action may be a consideration for the SJRIP in the future (i.e. post-2023).

The BC deadline to provide a post-2023 recommendation is July 18, 2019. The PO will then provide synthesis of recommendations by July 26, 2019. To discuss these recommendations, a meeting is needed in August and the Doodle Poll for that meeting is due July 18, 2019.

5. Recap Habitat Workshop planning effort from Annual Meeting

The PO summarized the exercise conducted during the annual meeting and the conversation that followed. This summary will be sent to the BC once it is internally finalized by the PO.

6. SJRIP budget/funding issues

All contracts were awarded and Reclamation is working on drafting its fiscal year 2021 budget. Fiscal year 2020 has not been appropriated yet.

7. Recap of Reclamation's 2019 maintenance release and current available water

Reclamation conducted a maintenance release from Navajo Dam from June 3rd to June 15th 2019. This release was not a prescribed release from the SJRIP Flow Recommendations. However, it falls within Reclamation's 2006 Record of Decision and was performed as one component of a plan to maintain the channel capacity downstream of Navajo Dam such that the Flow Recommendations can be achieved. Though the release was very short, Reclamation took the opportunity to meet some of the major flow recommendation goals. Three of the four flow goals were attained: 2,500cfs (80 days), 5,000 (52 days), and 10,000 (6 days). The fourth goal, 8,000 cfs, was almost attained with 9.2 days of flow at this cfs target. While the current available water suggests a peak release could have been conducted, it was not until mid-June that the available water calculations indicated this type of release would have been possible.

The current available water calculation suggests a peak release be conducted in fall but it may benefit fish more to maintain elevated base flows now until the fall. This type of release strategy would allow the reservoir to end near 6063 under most probable conditions. The proposal to the BC was to maintain base flows at ~ 1500 cfs until November when dam releases would be dropped to base flows < 1000 cfs. It is possible two habitat monitoring flights could be used to assess the difference in the number of running secondary channels and amount of backwater between the elevated baseflow and the baseflow <1000 cfs. BC members voiced support for Reclamation to release the available water through higher baseflows.

8. Update on Colorado Pikeminnow adaptive management stocking plan and not stocking age-0 fish in 2019

The next version will have criteria that includes consideration of Animas River snowpack and snow water equivalent. The next draft will be provided to the BC prior to the fall meeting.

9. Comments on Razorback Sucker Augmentation plan

Comments were received by four BC members and those will be addressed in the final version which will be submitted for BC by the end of August.

10. Recap decision points and review assigned action items

- The BC May 14, 2019 summary will be updated and posted to the web.
- Zeigler will mail out San Juan River Nonnative Fish Stocking Procedure and Cooperative Agreement for signature from all signatories.
- SOW 19a will be updated to ensure tagging of Colorado Pikeminnow is included.

- SOW 44 will be resubmitted for consideration in fiscal year 2021 based on feedback from BC members and peer reviewers.
- The PO/BC AWP recommendation will be provided to the CC for approval.
- BC members need to submit post-2023 recommendation by July 18, 2019.
- The response to the Doodle Poll for post-2023 follow-up is due July 18, 2019.
- The PO will provide a summary of the Habitat Exercise from the May 16, 2019 meeting.
- The final version of the Razorback Sucker Augmentation Plan will be sent to BC towards the end of August.
- The Colorado Pikeminnow adaptive management stocking plan revised by the Fall BC Meeting.
- The PO will set up a doodle poll for the Fall BC Meeting.
- BC chair nominations will occur during Fall BC Meeting.
- Decision points:
 - 1) The PO/BC made a recommendation for the AWP for fiscal year 2020
 - 2) Both the PO and BC agreed on and recommended elevated bases flows as a way for Reclamation to release the calculated available water from Navajo Reservoir.

1. Schedule next meeting/call

Fall BC meeting will be the first two weeks of December in Durango and a Doodle Poll will be sent to determine exact dates. At this meeting, a BC Chair will need to be chosen. It is preferred that there are multiple nominations and the Chair is regularly rotated.

The habitat workshop will likely be combined with the December meeting but it was suggested that adding a third full day to an already busy meeting may not be a preferred option. Another suggestion option is to add a day to the Researcher Meeting in January for the habitat workshop.

The Researchers Meeting will be 14-15 January 2020 in Durango, CO

BIOLOGY COMMITTEE ACTION ITEM LOG (Updated July 25, 2019)						
Item No.*	Action Item	Meeting/Ori gination	Responsible Party(s)	Due Date	Revised Due Date	Date Completed
1	Provide RBS/CPM stocking/capture/recapture data		PIs to PO	Before Jan. 1		
2	Provide Preliminary Draft Report Presentations		PI	At Feb. meeting		
3	Review LRP		BC	At fall meeting		
4	Review Peer Review Comments from the February and May meetings		BC	At fall meeting		
5	Provide Draft Reports		PIs to PO	By end of March		
6	Scopes of Work		PIs to PO	By end of March		
7	Provide Final Reports		PIs to PO	By end of June		
8	Annual Data Delivery		PIs to PO	By June 30		
9	T&E Species Data		BC to PO	By Dec. 31		
10	Compile T&E data and Program progress into summary to address overall Program recovery goals/objectives for presentation		PO/BC	At May meeting		
11	Distribute consolidated data and list of annual data collected and available in the Program's database		PO to BC	By Jan. 31		
12	Recapture analysis on PIT tagged fish		Durst	By March		

BIOLOGY COMMITTEE ACTION ITEM LOG (Updated July 25, 2019)						
Item No.*	Action Item	Meeting/Ori gination	Responsible Party(s)	Due Date	Revised Due Date	Date Completed
13	Coordinate CPM stocking closely with BOR to avoid negative impact due to high flows/releases		PIs	Annually		
14	Revise RBS Augmentation Goals (based on the outcome of experimental stocking and analysis by Franssen and Durst). What is the appropriate numbers of fish to stock?	5/10/10	NMFWCO/PO	05/2011 – provide update and extend as needed	Ongoing	
15	Pursue effects study on Hg/Colorado Pikeminnow with other groups/programs	1/14/10	PO lead		Ongoing	
16	Include benchmarks for recovery in LRP (amended to also included in Pathways document and monitoring protocols)	12/5/14	Mata	01/5/2015	Ongoing	
17	Status updates for the LRP	12/2/15	PIs to Mata	02/23/2016	Ongoing	
18	Make Program peer-reviewed publications available to Program participants	11/29/16	PO (Mata)	02/21/2017	Ongoing	
19	Disposition of Razorback <300 mm TL	02/21/17	NMFWCO	05/16/2017	Ongoing	11/28/2017 TBD 2019
20	Draft a plan for Colorado Pikeminnow stockings	02/21/17	PO, NMFWCO, and NMDGF	02/21/2017	Ongoing	
21	Coordinate aerial flights for base flow imaging	11/28/17	BC (Lamarra)/PO (Franssen)	Fall	Ongoing	
22	Post BC May 14, 2019 meeting summary to SJRIP website.	07/25/2019	PO	Prior to fall meeting		

BIOLOGY COMMITTEE ACTION ITEM LOG (Updated July 25, 2019)						
Item No.*	Action Item	Meeting/Ori gination	Responsible Party(s)	Due Date	Revised Due Date	Date Completed
23	Signatures for the San Juan River Nonnative Fish Stocking Procedure and Cooperative Agreement.	07/25/2019	NMDGF	Fall 2019		
24	Update SOW 19a to ensure tagging of Colorado Pikeminnow is included.	07/25/2019	PIs	07/30/2019		
25	Resubmit SOW 44 for consideration in fiscal year 2021 based on feedback from BC members and peer reviewers.	07/25/2019	PIs	End of March 2020		
26	Provide BC AWP recommendation to CC for approval.	07/25/2019	PO	07/30/2019		
27	Submit post-2023 recommendation.	07/25/2019	BC	07/18/2019		
28	Respond to the doodle poll for post-2023 follow-up.	07/25/2019	BC	07/18/2019		
29	Provide summary of the Habitat Exercise from the May 16, 2019 meeting.	07/25/2019	PO	7/25/2019		
30	Colorado Pikeminnow adaptive management stocking plan revision	07/25/2019	NMDGF	Fall 2019		
31	Doodle poll for the Fall BC Meeting.	07/25/2019	PO	August 2019		
32	BC chair nominations	07/25/2019	BC	Fall 2019		
33	Develop a habitat workshop	02/21/19	PO	05/14/19	Fall 2019	
34	Razorback Sucker Augmentation Plan	05/14/2019	NMFWCO (Furr)	Nov. 2019	August 2019	

BIOLOGY COMMITTEE ACTION ITEM LOG
(Updated July 25, 2019)

Item No.*	Action Item	Meeting/Ori gination	Responsible Party(s)	Due Date	Revised Due Date	Date Completed
23	Response to BOR Maintenance Release Proposal	05/14/2019	BOR (Behery)	05/21/2019		
24	Update Colorado Pikeminnow adaptive management stocking plan	05/14/2019	NMDGF and PO	Nov. 2019		
25	Provide update to CC on not stocking CPM in FY19	05/14/2019	BC Chair	05/16/2019		
26	PO will inform SNARRC to not produce CPM for FY19	05/14/2019	PO	05/21/2019		
27	Revised SOWs and response to comments	05/14/2019	PIs	06/14/2019		
28	Revised Razorback Sucker augmentation plan review and comments	05/14/2019	BC	06/30/2019		
29	Doodle poll for second draft of AWP in July 2019	05/14/2019	PO	05/30/2019		

*Items were re-numbered after changes were made

Yellow highlight indicates annual action items

Green highlight indicates new action item

Red highlight indicates completed action items